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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Florida's standards-driven performance assessment, emphasizing teacher preparation, and touching on K-12 accountability. Florida's educational reform and accountability efforts are driven by the Florida System of School Improvement and Accountability document. The system is derived from state goals similar to the national Goals 2000. The system served as the foundation for the development of three sets of standards (for K-12 students, for teacher practice, and for teacher subject matter content). Accountability for teacher preparation programs is enforced through the Teacher Education Continued Program Approval Standards. The standards emphasize accomplished practice, teacher competencies, teaching skills, and increased diversity. Florida's system of accountability for performance in teacher preparation units includes both statewide and locally developed performance measures. Florida has a comprehensive system related to accountability for teacher performance, but the system is in varying stages of development. There are several challenges to this type of change, including: accepting the paradigm shift to performance; assessing what is currently in existence; sorting and selecting; modifying internship evaluations; developing bigger and better assessments; and the management system for decision-making. Florida is currently faced with two critical issues: the management system for decision-making and assessment of competence in the content area. (SM)

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Standards-Based Accountability As a Tool for Making a Difference in Student Learning

A State and An Institutional Perspective on Standards-Based Accountability

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Standards-Driven Performance Assessment in Florida

As Pamela Moss so aptly stated:

> I think it is crucial that teacher preparation programs hold themselves accountable for the quality of the decisions they make. This means that there should be on-going evidence-based program review, open to the scrutiny of responsible others, that considers both the quality of the program and the validity of its recommendations. (P. 38)

That is what this presentation is all about.

Florida's educational reform and accountability efforts are driven by a document first drafted in the 1990's under the leadership of then Commissioner of Education, Betty Castor, who now leads the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Entitled, *Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability,* this system is derived from a series of State goals that are quite similar to the national *Goals 2000,* also developed during the last decade. The *System* served as the foundation for the development of three sets of standards -- one for K-12 students that we call the *Sunshine State Standards*, one for teachers that we call the *Accomplished Practices*, and another for teachers called the *Subject Matter Content Standards*. A brief description of each follows.

- Sunshine State Standards: These standards for K-12 students cover each of the major discipline groups taught in the schools and are benchmarked at the K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 levels, with the same standards across grade levels and increasing levels of knowledge and skills at each grade level. Attempts were made to link these standards with national standards for K-12 students.

- The Accomplished Practices: There are 12 Accomplished Practices, quite similar to the INTASC principles. They address such general competency areas as knowledge of subject matter, assessment, communication, planning, technology, ethics, etc. Each of the Practices is benchmarked at three levels -- the preprofessional (post-graduation), professional (post-induction), and accomplished levels.

- The Subject Matter Content Standards: This is the last set of standards written, just being completed in 1998. These content standards for teachers are linked to the Sunshine State Standards, establishing what teachers should know and be able to do to help

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students achieve the Sunshine State Standards. In theory, to the extent that the Sunshine State Standards track national standards, Subject Matter Content Standards should also track national standards.

Although the primary focus of this paper is on teacher preparation, a few more words are in order regarding accountability of K-12 schools and students. Statewide tests have been developed based on the Sunshine State Standards -- Florida Writes! and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). These are administered at various points in time and linked to the students' ability to progress to a new grade level and graduate from elementary, middle, and high school. Schools are graded based on pass rates of students. Failing schools are publicly announced and programs for remediation are implemented.

Accountability for teacher preparation programs is enforced through the *Teacher Education Continued Program Approval Standards*, of which there are five. Standards require the following for each program leading to initial certification:

- A 100% demonstration rate on each of the 12 Accomplished Practices -- Standard 1.
- A 90% pass rate on the teacher certification exam (all three subtests -- basic skills component, pedagogical component, and the specialization component) -- Standard 2
- A 90% eligibility for rehire rate (i.e., not more than 10% of program graduates fail to be rehired because of poor performance) -- Standard 5

There are also standards requiring increased diversity (Standard 4) and compliance with a host of State mandates (Standard 3). Among the mandates are such things as:

- Continuous improvement of program processes and graduates' performance
- Inclusion of instruction related to competencies tested in state exams for teacher certification and K-12 student progression
- The development, approval, and implementation of a State-approved Institutional Program Evaluation Plan, or IPEP, that contains three parts:
    - The unit's plan to evaluate its compliance with each of the Standards
    - An annual report on the in-house evaluation
    - An improvement plan/report.

The veracity of these Plans and the institution's compliance with the standards is reviewed once every five years on-site in a joint review with NCATE for accredited institutions and in a single review for those which are not NCATE accredited.

Thus, the Florida system of accountability for performance in teacher preparation units

includes both statewide and locally developed performance measures, allowing for a balanced approach to state and locally controlled decision-making, as well as a set of process measures tied to other state mandates and priorities. The State strongly opposes what Marzano and Kendall (1996) warn against -- a cookie-cutter approach with one size fitting all.

Status of Implementation of Florida's Accountability System for Teacher Preparation Units

Florida has a rather comprehensive system related to accountability for teacher performance, but this system is in varying stages of development. Teacher preparation units are required to provide a list of their graduates to the Florida Department of Education on an annual basis. These reports form the foundation for reports developed by the DOE on employability and certification examination pass rates (Standards 2 and 5). Hence, compliance with these two standards is documented in the annual IPEP with relative ease. Institutions are also finding it relatively easy to report on diversity and compliance with State mandates (Standards 3 and 4) in their IPEPs. Standard 1, however, the one related to performance on the Accomplished Practices is the major exception; it is the most difficult of the standards. The remainder of this paper will focus on that requirement.

For an institution to meet Standard 1, the State requires annual documentation in the IPEP, with verification on site every five years, regarding both of the following:

- The sources of data to be used as evidence of Practice attainment and
- The management system that will be used to ensure that the Practices are in fact demonstrated and that candidates are denied graduation if they fail to demonstrate each and every Practice.

The State expects that if a teacher candidate fails to demonstrate any of the Practices, graduation from a State-approved teacher education program will be denied. In the very near future, the State will most likely begin to place programs on probation for failure to comply with this requirement.

The Accomplished Practices are also beginning to govern teacher promotion decisions in the districts. The State Department of Education is strongly "encouraging" each district to use the Practices as the basis for their staff development plans, and many are doing so. However, there is currently no statute requiring the use of these Practices in in-service programs, unlike for pre-service programs.

The Subject Matter Content Standards are new and will eventually replace the current Florida Adopted Subject Area Competencies, which serve as the basis for the specialization component of the teacher certification exam. Teacher candidates will need to pass this test to become certified, and programs which do not meet the 90% pass rate standard will go on probation and may loose approval. Institutions state-wide will be expected to transition to these Standards; however, the parallel existence of two sets of content standards -- one tied to K-12 standards and one tied to the certification exam -- makes the situation very complex.

Impact on Teacher Preparation Programs

In Florida, we have faced, and are continuing to face, several great challenges, and these, too, are in varying stages across the State:

1. Acceptance of the Paradigm Shift to Performance: Teacher preparation programs across the state have begun to understand and internalize that the paradigm has shifted from a focus on "I taught it" to "I know they learned it because they have demonstrated it through ..." And that is a giant step forward. Most, if not all, institutions, including my own, appear to have successfully met this first challenge.

2. Assessing What We Have in Existing Programs and Courses: Institutions across the State, including my own, have spent the past two years reviewing courses and field experiences to locate the opportunities ("sources of data") for students to demonstrate competencies. Most have been successful in finding the assessments that already exist. Hence, we have met the second challenge -- self-assessing where we are in evaluating student progress against the Accomplished Practices.

3. Sorting and Selecting: Many institutions in the State are now in the position of trying to identify which of the identified sources of data can be used in making decisions about student progression with regard to the Accomplished Practices. These institutions have identified lots of little pieces, and they are trying to grapple with the fact that some should count, while others should not either because they are relatively insignificant or because they are not adequately tracked. Institutions are also finding that some Practices may generate an accumulation of evidence that is far greater than needed, e.g., Planning; while others, e.g., Ethics, may be insufficiently assessed. Some institutions in the State have met this challenge; others are still in process. For the most part, the larger the institution, the more difficult the task. My institution is still in process.

4. Modifying Internship Evaluations: Most institutions have redesigned or will redesign their evaluation process for final interns around the Accomplished Practices. We are seeing a great deal of variety in these instruments, with some being quite simplistic -- a simple rating scale based on the most abbreviated form of the Practices (the name of the Practice itself and/or its preprofessional benchmark). A few institutions, including my institution, have identified specific sets of behaviors that are indicative of the Practices and rate students' performances on these behavioral checklists. The State will need to determine whether the minimalist approach is adequate.

5. Developing Some Bigger and Better Assessments: Some institutions in the State will rely exclusively on a well-defined set of assessments used in courses and field experiences, including their modified internship evaluation form, and the State is comfortable with this decision -- as long as the assessments are sufficient and appropriate. Most of these institutions are packaging the assessments in portfolios. Others will look toward improvements of what they currently have, eventually replacing many of the smaller pieces, by developing or modifying one or more assessments with the exciting potential to better measure attainment of combinations of the Practices.

My institution is currently looking at something along the lines of the Western Oregon University Teacher Work Sample Methodology, which focusses not only on a demonstration of what teacher candidates have learned but also whether or not they have positively impacted learning among K-12 students. In addition, we will have an electronic portfolio assessment process, and we will probably maintain some of the assessments identified during our needs assessment stage as evidence of competency. It is not clear, however, how many institutions are developing new comprehensive assessments other than portfolios and intern evaluation forms.

6. Management System for Decision-Making: This is perhaps the greatest challenge of all. How do we put it all together to decide if a student has demonstrated the important competencies and should be allowed to graduate? No matter how many pieces of data we collect as evidence, no matter whether they are limited to things collected in courses and during final internship or include some comprehensive large-scale assessments, what do we do if some evidence says the student is okay but other evidence conflicts with that. Suppose the portfolio is great and the performance in the schools is poor, or vice versa. What if they fail the tests related to human development and learning, but do not do anything that would be considered developmentally inappropriate with their third grade students? What if they develop an exciting assessment package for a thematic unit but make poor decisions about student progress in the classroom? This challenge is far from being met at most institutions in the State. In fact, at many institutions, we are not yet even at the awareness level. At my institution, we have reached awareness, but we have not begun to sort out how to solve the problem.

The Critical Current Issues for Florida

There are two critical issues being faced in Florida now, and probably nationally -- the management system for decision making and assessment of competence in the content area.

The Management System for Decision Making

Syllabi and Assessments in Courses: Many faculty would like to use performances and products completed in classes, documented in syllabi and through course grades, as proof of learning. It is hard for university faculty to accept that, as important as syllabi are, they are only a representation of reality -- or what reality is hoped to be. Unfortunately, many Florida institutions are still leaning on a system tied to course requirements and failing to take into account that an assessment can be required in a course, but not required for a student to pass the course. This makes the course analysis approach weak. It is easy to identify each piece of information available in each and every class, but the extent to which that information can be used for decision-making is a far different matter. The State is working toward helping institutions understand this, but it will eventually need to say "no" to this approach.

Portfolios: Other institutions are using portfolios, but two problems have surfaced:

- Some institutions are reluctant to identify the specific items to be used in the portfolios -- leaving that to the judgment of the faculty on a case by case basis. The State is not

accepting this, having learned from some institutions where specific sources of data were identified for portfolio assessments that often, the data sources were not sound indicators of competence. For example, institutions have proposed "reading the State's Code of Ethics" as proof of ethical behavior or "attending school improvement meetings" as proof of commitment to continuous improvement.

- Institutions are also struggling with the development of portfolio assessment systems that allow for sufficient time and procedures to correct deficiencies prior to the final assessment in which the decision to graduate is made. There is concern at the State level that institutions are allowing students to graduate when the portfolios are not adequately assessed or when problems are identified because it is too late to remediate. The State has not yet found the Standard "not met", but this may be the decision of the future in these cases.

Assessment of Knowledge in the Subject Area

The second issue, equally difficult, is how we will assure competency in the specialization area. There are three sub-issues related to this:

- The statewide test is based on the old version of the competencies -- not the new ones that are linked to national standards.

- There are hundreds of competencies to assess -- 400 in elementary alone -- making serious assessment virtually impossible.

- The vast majority of content standards are at the knowledge and comprehension level. While the preprofessional benchmark for the Accomplished Practice related to Subject Matter Knowledge calls for linkages across content areas, applications to real world settings, and the use of a variety of means to assist student acquisition and use of knowledge, there are no pedagogical skills to operationalize these in any of the content areas in any of the State competencies and standards.

The expectation of the State is that the teacher preparation institutions will use the State's Subject Matter Content Standards to define what teachers know and that the State will use the program approval process to ensure that this is accomplished. This may take a while.

Conclusion

We have come a long way in Florida. We are committed to standards-driven performance assessment as a State, and we have a solid system for implementing it. We also have a long way to go before we can say that we are adequately assessing performance against our Accomplished Practices, which include Knowledge of Subject Matter. Determining whether or not institutions have a sufficient and appropriate set of assessments that are used or "guaranteed" has been and will continue to be the main focus of most program approval visits in the immediate future. We have high hopes for getting where we want to go through technical assistance to institutions, professional development activities, and a supportive review structure.

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Standards-Based Accountability As a Tool for Making a Difference in Student Learning: A State and An Institutional Perspective

I think it is crucial that teacher preparation programs hold themselves accountable for the quality of the decisions they make. This means that there should be on-going evidence-based program review, open to the scrutiny of responsible others, that considers both the quality of the program and the validity of its recommendations

Pamela Moss, 1998

Standards-Driven Performance Assessment in Florida

* Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability
  - Sunshine State Standards *(P-12)*
    - FCAT and Florida Writes!
  - Accomplished Practices *(teachers)*
  - Subject Matter Content Standards *(pre-service teachers)*
  - Continued Program Approval Standards *(teacher education units)*

Accomplished Practices

* Assessment
* *Communication*
* Continuous Improvement
* *Critical Thinking*
* Diversity
* *Ethics*
* *Human Development and Learning*
* Knowledge of Subject Matter
* *Learning Environments*
* Planning
* *Role of the Teacher*
* Technology

Continued Program Approval Standards

* 100% demonstration rate on the A.P.s
* 90% pass rate on the FTCE
* 90% eligibility for rehire rate
* Increasing diversity
* Compliance with State mandates
  - *Continuous improvement -- process -- performance*
  - *Coverage of State competencies*
  - *Institutional Program Evaluation Plan*

Institutional Program Evaluation Plan (IPEP)

* Components
  - Evaluation Plan *(re. how unit will self-assess compliance with standards during current year)*
  - Annual Report *(re. in-house self-assessment based on evaluation plan conducted year before)*
  - Improvement Plan *(for next year)* and Report *(from previous year)*
* Review
  - Annual paper review
  - On-site review every five years

Implementation Status Report

* In place:
  - FTCE pass rate (Standard 2)
  - Most State Mandates (Standard 3)
  - Diversity (Standard 4)
  - Employability (rehire rate -- Standard 5)
* ***In process:***
  - ***Accomplished Practices (Standard 1)***
    - ***Sources of data – well underway***
    - ***Management system – getting started***

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Status Report (cont.)

- **Accomplished Practices**
  - Pre-Service
    - Graduation to be denied if not demonstrated
    - Getting closer
  - In-Service
    - Being worked into staff development plans
    - Optional
- **Subject Matter Content Standards**
  - Too new
  - Need to be tied to FTCE as well as program approval

Impact on Teacher Preparation Programs

- Acceptance of Paradigm Shift to Performance -- *Internalized*
- Assessing What We Have -- *Complete*
- Sorting and Selecting -- *In process*
  - Lots of pieces
  - Unequal coverage of Practices
- Modifying Internship Evaluations -- *Mostly done but uneven in quality/detail*

Impact (continued)

- Developing Some Bigger and Better Assessments -- *Optional*
  - Some will not do this
  - Some will do this and replace some "pieces"
- Management system for Decision-Making -- *Some awareness/comprehension*
  - Use of evidence
  - Conflicting evidence

Critical Current Issue for Florida -- #1

- Management System for Decision-Making
  - Syllabi and Assessments in Courses
    - *May not be required to pass*
    - *May be too piecemeal*
  - Portfolios
    - *May not have "good" evidence*
    - *May not be used adequately for decision-making*

Critical Current Issue for Florida -- #2

- Assessment of Knowledge in the Subject Area
  - *FTCE is based on old competencies -- two sets in existence*
  - Hundreds of new competencies
  - *Knowledge and comprehension, not higher order*
  - Nothing for content-specific pedagogy

Conclusions

- Come a long way; committed to standards-driven performance assessment
- *Still have a long way to go*
- Appropriate/sufficient assessments and the management issues are primary current concerns
- *High hopes*
  - *Technical assistance*
  - *Professional development*
  - *Supportive review process*

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